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The Walking Cure

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The Walking Cure

A photograph of a narrow, cobblestone street in a European city. A person is walking away from the camera down the center of the street. The street is flanked by tall, colorful buildings with various architectural details like windows, balconies, and street lamps. The sky is overcast.

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Making Sense of the City



Disposition

1. Sensing and Sense Making
 - “Urban Psychology”
2. Architecture & Perception
 - Atmospheres and Experiences
3. SEB-site

Distraction

“City spaces must never be meaningless. The urban landscape should rather provoke curiosity and present the citizen with challenges.”

(Stig Lennart Andersson)

Making Sense of the City

- Sensing and Sense Making
 - How do people actually
 - Use (“move around”, “go about”)
 - Perceive and experience
 - Imagine and conceptualize
 - The city
 - Research questions
 - What is urbanity to them?
 - Where does the centre start and stop? (Boundaries)
 - Pulse, atmosphere
 - The users’ perspectives
 - Not planners’ etc. assumptions
 - The city
 - Aalborg
 - People
 - Residents
 - Inner city
 - Suburbs
 - Visitors
 - Demographics, lifestyle
 - Methods
 - “Walking”: trajectories, itineraries while moving through space
 - Experiments (e.g. mental maps, disturbances)
 - Observations and interviews
 - Photos, films, drawings ...

Making Sense of the City

- What people encounter when walking/moving through the city
- Micro-aspects of people-environment interaction
 - Studying how being and living in the city is experienced and performed from the point of view of those people who are actually *in* the city.
 - Exploring how life unfolds in the urban landscape: in the streets, along sidewalks, on benches, in and between buildings, in parks, etc.

Mind and body

- Exteriority: urban space as external to mind and body
 - “Physical surrounding”
- Embeddedness: urban space as internal to mind and body
 - “Ecology”, which people live in, live with, live through

Exteriority and Embeddedness

"I confront the city with my body; my legs measure the length of the arcade; [...] my body weight meets the mass of the cathedral door, and my hand grasps the door pull as I enter the dark void behind. I experience the city through my body, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me.

(Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, Chichester 2005: 40)

Sensing and Sense Making

- Objective features
 - The urban landscape
 - Agents acting in this landscape (Latour)
- Subjective features
 - Affective predispositions
 - Cognitive predispositions
 - Knowledge, Discourses
- Situational factors, circumstances

Making Sense of the City

1. The city as a multi-sensory landscape

- Which sensorial impressions and feelings does the urban landscape generate (atmosphere, experiences)?
- Which kind of bodily expressions does this landscape allow for (performativity)?
- How do people's presence (movements) affect this landscape

2. Representations of the city

- How is the city represented mentally?
 - Maps: Memory
- How do people define the “centre of the city” (and periphery)?
 - Signs: Interpretation, Narration
- How is everyday urbanity tackled in a quotidian way?
 - Bodily schemata: Habits, Navigation, Auto-piloting

Architecture & Urban Psychology

- Representations:
 - How does a coherent concept of the city emerge from the numerous impressions available in the urban landscape?
 - Mental maps, signs
- Feelings:
 - What excites, involves, scares, attracts, thrills or disgusts people about this landscape?
 - Emotions, atmosphere
- Habits:
 - How do city dwellers go about performing their daily routines in what to newcomers may seem an amalgam of chaotic sensory data?
 - Bodily schemata, navigation

Architecture & Perception

- Architecture of Seeing
 - Visuality
 - Ideal: Utopia (future) (Visionary)
 - Distance: Control (power)
 - Image, branding
 - Transparency & symmetry: Orientation
 - Showing (off)



Ocularcentrism: Seeing is believing?



Architecture & Perception



- Architecture of sensing
 - Multi-sensual: Complex
 - Haptics, olfaction, audition, gustation, vision
 - Balance, thermoception, kinesthetics (Proprioception)
 - Pain/pleasure (Nociception)
 - Bodily: Embeddedness, Immersion
 - Immediacy: Spontaneity, Now
 - Being (rather than Becoming)
 - Presence: Non-Symbolic, Non-Interpretive (Gumbrecht, Sontag)

Presence: Materiality



Architecture of Sensing

- Atmospheres (Böhme)
 - Moods: relative stable state
 - Continuity: ambience
 - Generated by “inside”-agents
 - Sensed by “outsiders”
 - Liminal: “Containers”
 - Buildings, interiors
 - Plazas, squares
 - Streets, alleys ...
 - Neighbourhoods, pre-modern towns
 - “Scapes”: soundscapes and other sensescares
- Experiencing
 - Emotions: “activation readiness” (Frijda)
 - Discontinuous: rupture, disturbances
 - Performative: brought upon participants
 - Provoked: “Obstacles”
 - Artwork
 - Urban furniture: benches, trees ...
 - Waste, billboards, noise, crowds
 - Stages, playscapes, festivals ...

Container: Urban Interior





Obstacles: Nuisances







Making Sense of SEB

- Sensing and Sense Making
 - How do people actually
 - Use (“move around”, “go about”)
 - Perceive and experience
 - Imagine and conceptualize
 - The SEB-Site
 - Research questions
 - Abstract vs. concrete (geometry)
 - Nature vs. culture (landscape, spatiality)
 - Universal vs. relative (code)
 - Atmospheric permanence vs. emotional moment
 - Where does the site start and stop? (Boundaries)
 - People
 - Employees
 - “En passant”, circumstantially
 - City dwellers, purposefully
 - Skaters
 - Neighbours to the site
 - Tourists (incl. architects)
 - Methods
 - “Walking”: trajectories, itineraries while moving through space
 - Experiments (e.g. mental maps, disturbances)
 - Observations and interviews
 - Photos, films, drawings ...



Placing the buildings in the context of their landscape; Placing this complex in the context of its surroundings; Placing the surroundings in the context of an urban transformation site; Placing this site in the context of a larger cityscape.



“Sensing SEB”

1. **Movement: “Walking”**
 - Rhythms
 - Pace
 - “Styles”
2. **Containers**
 - Buildings
 - Urban interior?
3. **Obstacles**

- **Boundaries (“Walls”)**
 - Materiality
 - Transparency
 - Permeability
 - Private/public
 - Temporality
 - Permanent
 - Legitimacy
 - Skaters accepted; entrance contested
- **Slopes**
 - Movement
 - Obstacles
- **Skaters**
 - Obstacles
 - Obstructed by non-skaters



Exit: Cured?



Urban Psychology

Architecture

- Architecture of sensing
 - Atmosphere (Böhme)
 - Experiences
- Architecture of sense making
 - Psychogeography (Debord)
 - Mapping (Lynch)

Psychology

- Perception
 - Moods (Thayer)
 - Emotions (Frijda)
- “Socio-cultural” cognition
 - Microgenesis (Valsiner)
 - Mapping (Milgram)